

learning and leading

empowering effective educators through teacher evaluation and focused instruction

A message from the Superintendent

Dear Teachers,

As I wrote in a [Leader Letter](#) a few weeks ago, at MPS we are proving that establishing a comprehensive teacher evaluation system does not have to be divisive. Our new observation system is a working example of how teachers, principals and administrative staff are collaborating to create a system that works.

When making decisions about any aspect of the evaluation system, we start from the shared belief that, like all professionals, teachers deserve an evaluation system that offers regular, constructive feedback supporting growth and development and provides recognition of exceptional work. Our goal at MPS was to ensure that our system promoted a fair and accurate understanding of teacher performance, supported teacher growth and development and would be feasible to implement for both our observers and our teachers.

To help inform decisions about the MPS observation model, we sought feedback from teachers, principals, union leadership and administrative staff. We also consulted research, examined other school district and state approaches and reviewed budget and capacity analyses.

A recent Measures of Effective Teaching study involving 3,000 teachers in six school districts suggested more observations lead to a more reliable performance level rating and can help teachers become stronger in the classroom when coupled with feedback. Our challenge was to think creatively about what "more observations" would mean in MPS and to find the right balance between frequency of observation and feasibility of implementation.

The challenge of finding the right balance is not unique to Minneapolis. As we looked at different school district and state models across the country we found a variety of approaches, each informed by local context. In Hillsborough County, Florida, for instance, teachers have at least five and potentially up to 11 observations, based on factors like previous observation rating and number of years teaching. The recent Indiana state model, on the other hand, requires at least two "extended" observations and at least three "short" observations. Both Hillsborough and Indiana use two types of observers, a primary (typically principal) and a secondary (a peer or someone else), while Houston uses only an administrator and requires at least four observations, two longer and two shorter.

We also looked closely at the data we collected during our pilot year. We heard from teachers who experienced the pilot observations that one of the most valuable aspects of the observation was the feedback they were receiving; almost 90 percent reported that they would take feedback and use it to change their teaching. We also heard from principals that requiring three full observations done to our high standards was extremely challenging.

After reviewing research, state and school district models and our own pilot feedback, we came back to our core principles to help guide decision making: a fair and accurate system, a focus on teacher growth and development and feasibility for principals and teachers.

Needless to say, I am proud and excited about where we landed. To ensure that we maintain fairness and accuracy for teachers and provide multiple opportunities for feedback that supports teacher growth and development, we committed to every teacher receiving at least five observations.



To ensure feasibility and allow teachers to be part of the observation process, we committed to training a second group of observers, including classroom teachers, content specialists and administrative staff. These secondary observers will do a short observation and a new focused observation that was piloted last year. Principals, instead of doing three full observations, will do a single full observation and two shorter observations.

I am particularly excited by the types of observations we will use this year because they are tied closely to our focus on teacher growth and development. Every teacher will receive a full observation, which last year's participants identified as a great starting point for thinking about growth and development; a focused observation, in which participants can select an area of focus aligned to their growth and development goals; and at least three short observations, ensuring that all teachers in MPS benefit from more frequent, real-time feedback that supports teacher growth and development.

I know these are some big changes. Changes are never easy and there are bound to be some bumps in the road, but we are doing this because we know how important it is to support teacher growth and development. I hope we can all agree that's worth any short-term headaches as we all adjust to some new ways of doing things. After all, if we can do a better job supporting our teachers, we will be ensuring that our students get a great education.

Sincerely,

Bernadeia H. Johnson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Phase II Focused Instruction curriculum writer professional development complete

As the first phase of Focused Instruction is implemented in grades K, 3, 6 and 9, Phase II development of curriculum guides for grades PK, 1, 4, 7 and 10 is underway. During August and September, some 150 curriculum writers completed professional development on the course and unit development process. They will work this school year to create the curriculum guides and benchmark assessments that will be implemented in fall 2013. In addition to developing guides in all core content areas, the arts and health, this year we are excited to be adding world languages, media and High Five to the curriculum and assessment development teams. If you are interested in reviewing and providing feedback on these tools as they are developed, please reach out to the relevant content area lead using the [Teaching and Learning Department Intranet Site](#).

Classroom for Success (CFS) enhancements

In August 2012, the Teaching and Learning Department and IT Services trained all teachers on [Classroom for Success](#), an upgraded student data and information portal. Thanks to hundreds of staff who submitted suggestions for enhancement, the development team has prioritized the following features for future development and release (currently scheduled for January 2013):

- Dynamic student grouping
 - Create a custom group of students, then search and filter based on that group. This will be helpful for Special Ed, ESL teachers, counselors, social workers and principals who monitor specific groups.
- Attendance monitoring and interventions
- Automated communication with Hennepin County to collaborate on strategies for returning truant students to school, three-day letter, Staff Automated Reporting System (STAR) referral, Parent Group Meeting (PGM)
- Ability to filter roster and reports for EL, HHM and Advanced Learners
- Special Education case load management forms

We are always interested in hearing from teachers about their experience using CFS and about any ideas for improving the system. If you have a suggestion for enhancement or need technical assistance, please submit your request through the "Help" tab in Classroom for Success.



Focused Instruction online feedback form available

Incorporating teacher insight and feedback is critical to the ongoing success of Focused Instruction. The [Focused Instruction online feedback](#) form allows teachers to share issues they encounter related to content, linking or proofing/editing while utilizing the grades K, 3, 6 and 9 Focused Instruction curriculum guides. Focused Instruction Project Manager Tina Platt (tina.platt@mpls.k12.mn.us) will work with Teaching and Learning content specialists to prioritize requests on a weekly basis. High-priority modifications (e.g. content errors) will be made immediately. Other enhancement requests to the curriculum guides will be aggregated and posted on the Focused Instruction curriculum guide web page in January and July 2013. The online feedback process will store teacher input and edit requests that can later be sorted and analyzed to further enhance the Focused Instruction process.

Posting of Focused Instruction Year-at-a-Glance tools on MPS website

Focused Instruction provides more opportunities for parents to connect with teachers and administrators about their children's experience in school. **The year-at-a-glance (YAG) and course-at-a-glance (CAG) tools** will provide teachers and parents with a common language to use in discussing student progress. These tools are available for each Phase I grade/content level on the MPS website for families to access. Parents are encouraged to use the tools to have more in-depth conversations with teachers about where their students stand and how parents can help their children prepare to meet or exceed rigorous standards for achievement. The YAG and CAG tools will be translated into Hmong, Somali and Spanish and will be available in the coming weeks.

Guide to Focused Instruction now available on the Teaching and Learning intranet site

The Guide to Focused Instruction document is intended for curriculum writers, teachers, instructional specialists, instructional leaders and administrators who are interested in learning more about Focused Instruction at MPS. Our goal is to provide better aligned, more effective curricula and assessments to improve student outcomes.

The guide provides an overview of terminology and concepts needed to make sense of Focused Instruction. It also examines key components of curriculum guides and benchmark assessments and provides an overview of the development process that is being used to build these tools. The guide will be useful as Focused Instruction tools are implemented at grades K, 3, 6 and 9 this school year.

Historically, MPS has not offered consistent opportunities for teachers to receive useful feedback on their performance. Now, we are working with teachers and principals to build and phase-in a new evaluation system over the next two years that works for MPS teachers and schools. The system will be required by law in 2014-2015 and we want to make sure that it is not only tested and developed, but is also best suited to MPS and our shared focus on teacher growth and development.

In many areas, state law requirements reflect things MPS has been doing for years, like the peer review process, PLCs and mentoring and induction programs. We are committed to building on and improving the programs we have so that they work better for all teachers. In the areas that are newer, like evaluation, we are committed to keeping you involved in an ongoing dialogue about what's working, what's not and how we can support you better. We welcome your feedback and look forward to continuing this important work with you.

Visit our [website](#) for additional information on teacher evaluation and the state law.



STATE LAW AT A GLANCE

State Law Requirements	MPS Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer review process • Professional Learning Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer review process • Currently providing additional school leader and teacher training • Each school has a 90 minute weekly PLC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual growth and development plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the PAR process (PDP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summative evaluation by a qualified and trained evaluator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created observer evidence and accuracy certification process that all observers must pass • Collaboratively designing summation process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35% measures of student learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Value-added assessment model and growth model - Growth model when value-added data are not available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting value-added model • Currently in planning stage for measure of student learning for teachers not measured with value-added data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses longitudinal data on student engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting student surveys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher improvement process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the PAR process (GDPD and PSP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual teacher evaluation process as part of a professional review cycle (including multiple growth and feedback opportunities) based on professional teaching standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised SOEI • Implementing district-wide observation model

Student Survey Pilot Overview

This year, MPS will be piloting K-12 student surveys as part of the multiple measures of the teacher evaluation growth and support model. These surveys come from Tripod, a group from Harvard's Achievement Gap Initiative that has performed more than 10 years of research on student surveys for meaningful teacher feedback. The surveys ask students to give their perspective on a variety of aspects of their classroom experience. Because this is a pilot year, individual survey results will only be made available for teachers to see.



Teachers included in surveys:

- K-12 teachers in the SOEI observation model
- Specialists, ESL and SPED teachers
- Co-teachers: one teacher can be surveyed during the first survey administration and the other during the second

Logistics:

- Schools can choose paper or online surveys; choice must be used school-wide
- Schools will select one period when all teachers will give survey; schools will also select a make-up period for anyone on prep during that time
- Tripod will run all analyses and send back teacher reports

Survey types:

- Grades K-2: Responses on a 1-3 scale; developmentally appropriate language
 - Grades K-1 surveys will be proctored and read aloud in small groups
 - Grade 2 surveys will be read aloud in a whole-class setting
- Grades 3-5: Responses on a 1-5 scale; developmentally appropriate language
- Grades 6-12: Responses on a 1-5 scale; developmentally appropriate language

Survey timelines and dates:

- Administration 1: The week of November 26-30
- Administration 2: April 2013
- Turnaround time for results is approximately six weeks

Absence Policies:

- Students who are absent during administration will not be asked to make up the survey
- Surveys will be administered if teachers are absent

Additional Information:

www.tripodproject.org/about/background/
www.tripodproject.org/services-offerings/survey-assessments/



PAR Overview

Since 1997, the MPS Professional Assistance and Review (PAR) process has provided confidential, collegial support for teachers who are experiencing circumstances that challenge their job performance. The PAR process is MPS' primary means of providing intensive, specialized support for teachers who need it and for transitioning teachers who are unwilling or unable to perform their duties out of the school district.

PAR remains separate and distinct from the teacher evaluation system. The teacher evaluation system is intended to provide all teachers with regular, constructive feedback; opportunities for professional growth; and recognition when they do exceptional work. The teacher evaluation system may help improve the effectiveness of PAR by providing additional data points and school-level feedback and support, but it will not change the PAR process or expectations. Additionally, the teacher evaluation system does not provide any automatic referrals for PAR assessments.

For more information about PAR please contact **Lucy Kapp** (Lucy.Kapp@mpls.k12.mn.us).

eCompass Tips and Updates



We are pleased to report that eCompass is fully functional. Please complete all observation forms in eCompass. Now that the system is working properly, we will no longer be processing forms outside of eCompass. Please email tequestions@mpls.k12.mn.us if you need help using eCompass; we are happy to assist you. Also, please check out this [website](#) for guide videos.

Teachers:

- Complete sentences and full paragraphs are not required in the pre-conference form; please feel free to use bullets. We are asking teachers and observers to send us completed forms that can be made anonymous and shared as examples. We will inform you when these are available.
- For the focused observation reflection guide, you only need to self-assess on the elements you select for your focus. You can self-assess on more elements, but it is not required.
- Scheduling in eCompass is initiated by the observer. Scheduling in eCompass is not required. Check with your observer about how he or she plans to schedule.
- When you are ready to share your pre-conference form with your observer, please be sure to do the following:
 - Click the "finalize" button in the bottom right corner
 - Once you click this button a "share" button will appear in the top left corner. Please click this "share" button when you are ready to share with your observer.
- When you are ready to share your reflection guide form with your observer, please be sure to click "share" on the top of the form.
- Please be sure to save your pre-conference and reflection guide work as you go.
- To view your observation evidence and scores please follow these [directions](#).

Observers:

- To share your observation evidence and performance levels please follow these [directions](#).
- To view the teacher's reflection guide answers, please click on the teacher's name next to the reflection guide question.
- For focused observations, there is no auto-create note feature; this feature is only available for the full observation. (The auto-create note feature copies the pre-conference form over to the evidence form and auto-tags the evidence to the corresponding element.) We are working to include this for the focused observation for next year.
- If you would like to use the "split/double enter feature" in the "collect and sort evidence" step, please note the following:
 - If you bold, italicize or underline your text, the split feature does not work.
 - If you are copying and pasting from a Word document, add an extra line (using the enter key) between the text you would like to split

Roadshow Overview and Calendar



The teacher evaluation team has enjoyed the opportunity to be in many schools over the past six weeks for the roadshow. The roadshow presentation gives team members an opportunity to introduce themselves to teachers, describe the 2012-13 evaluation system, answer questions and collect thoughts and feedback from teachers. The roadshow covers the value-added report **pilot**, the student survey **pilot**, the SOEI observation model (recap) and engagement opportunities.

We are eager to continue working with you to build an evaluation system that supports you. We will be visiting remaining schools through mid-November. Please refer to the calendar to the right to determine when we will be at your school.

Roadshow Calendar

Location	Date	Time
Armatage	Oct. 22	2:15 - 3:00 p.m.
Bancroft	Nov. 8	2:15 - 3:00 p.m.
Bethune	Oct. 17	7:00 a.m.
Broadway	Oct. 22	8:30 - 9:30 a.m.
ECSE	Oct. 22	2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Edison	Nov. 12	3:15 - 3:30 p.m.
Harrison	Oct. 23	2:35 - 3:30 p.m.
Henry	Nov. 13	3:15 - 3:50 p.m.
Kenny	Oct. 31	2:45 - 3:30 p.m.
Lake Harriet Lower	Oct. 23	8:30 - 9:15 a.m.
Lucy Craft Laney	Nov. 1	7:00 - 8:25 a.m.
Marcy	Oct. 15	7:30 a.m.
Metro St. Joe's	Oct. 29	2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Northeast	Nov. 15	8:15 - 9:15 a.m.
Pratt	Nov. 1	8:30 - 9:30 a.m.
Roosevelt	Nov. 7	7:15 - 8:45 a.m.
Transition Plus	Oct. 24	8:00 - 9:00 a.m.
Washburn	Nov. 6	7:30 - 8:15 a.m.
Wellstone	Oct. 25	7:45 - 8:05 a.m.
Windom	Oct. 30	2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

FAQ's

1) Can I select my observer?

Teachers cannot select their primary observer. Teachers can request a different secondary observer **if their site has multiple secondary observers**. Each building has a pool of secondary observers that may include PAR mentors, instructional specialists and teachers. We are encouraging more teachers to become certified so we can expand the pool of secondary observers who have specific content knowledge. This year, the pool is small, so in most cases instructional specialists will perform the majority of secondary observations.

2) What is value-added modeling?

Value-added modeling is a statistical approach to estimating the impact that a teacher has on a group of students over the course of one year. In a value-added model, a growth prediction is made for each individual student based on prior achievement and a number of factors (e.g. EL status, IEP status, mobility). At the end of the school year, each student's actual achievement is measured and compared to the prediction. The difference between the predicted growth and the actual growth is referred to as the value-added estimate.

3) Why are we using value-added modeling in teacher evaluation?

Beginning in 2014-15, state law mandates that teacher evaluations contain a student achievement component. As opposed to proficiency or simple growth measurements, value-added modeling attempts to make standardized test data more meaningful to teachers by accounting for many factors that affect achievement.

4) What tests will be used for value-added reports?

Grade	Pre-test	Post-test
K	BKA - fall	BKA - spring
1	MPS 1 st -grade assessment - fall	MPS 1 st -grade assessment - spring
2	MAP test - fall	MAP test - spring
3	2 nd -grade spring MAP test	3 rd -grade MCA
4-8	Prior year MCA	Current year MCA

5) Who will receive an individual value-added report this fall?

Individual value-added reports will be available for elementary homeroom teachers, math teachers with students in tested grades and ELA/reading/English teachers with students in tested grades. See the table above for more information.

6) Does the value-added model account for attendance?

For statistical reasons, the value-added formula cannot control for current-year attendance. However, we are working to determine other methods (such as taking past attendance into account) to ensure that students who miss significant days of school are not counted toward a value-added estimate. For this pilot year, attendance will not be used as a part of the value-added model.